



TEST DRIVE

LASTING IMPREZION

You won't forget a drive in the Subaru Impreza WRX

There are people out there who still get misty-eyed about the Subaru Impreza. It's like a club with no name that still remembers the hard-charging, bare-bones speed machine from the 1990s, given to us kids by Japanese dudes in the name of fun.

But time moved on; everyone got a little older and gents in need of fast money and a fast vehicle looked elsewhere for their wheels. By 2007 the Impreza was, like us, not quite what it used to be: it seemed a bit conservative, softer around the middle. Although still a good, speedy drive, it could have passed for – choke – a rep's car.

The Japanese dudes of fun must have realised they were tarnishing our memories, because the 2009 WRX turbo hatch has got a whole lot more: more power, more torque, more acceleration, more responsiveness.

At 4.4m and 1400kg, the Impreza is no go-kart, but with its extra-stiff suspension, you're in and out of corners before

you know it. Ride quality can be a bit tough on your bony ass – but that's what you want, isn't it? It's pretty loud at speed, although you'll take this trade-off. Subaru says you can get the thing from zero to 100km/h in 5.3sec, and after a couple of hairy getaways from the lights, I believe them.

With 17-inch alloy wheels (and alloy pedals), and twin turbo exhausts you could stuff a frozen turkey up, the WRX is clearly aimed at a certain segment of the market. And yet this is a big car. There's plenty of space for luggage, it's comfortable throughout, and the slightly downbeat detailing and 58 airbags say family hatch, not boy racer.

If you are in the club with no name, you may not agree with all this wasteful luxury, but the sharp performance will make you a believer. For a buck fifty under \$40,000, you'll get a vehicle you can take on a track, up a mountain and on a family holiday and still feel like you're having fun. Thanks, dudes. – *Ivan Smith*

ALTERNATIVES



MITSUBISHI LANCER RALLIART

The Ralliart handles like an eager stallion, with a whip-crack performance and a decent range of extras for your money. Corners may be cut here and there, but who's really counting? **\$42,990**



VW GOLF GTI

Once the last word in fun, sporty, performance packages, the Golf GTI is still damn fine and will get you to the shops in a tyre-screaming hurry. If you want a turbocharger yet still want to be liked, pick this. **\$38,490**

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